

Pamphlet
326
M64n

THE NEGRO SANHEDRIN



A CALL TO CONFERENCE

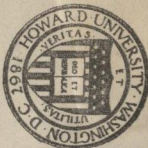
BY

KELLY MILLER
HOWARD UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, D. C.



Price 25 Cents

Copyright 1923, by Kelly Miller



HOWARD UNIVERSITY

J. STANLEY DURKEE, A. M., PH. D., D. D.
PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY

WASHINGTON, D. C.

FOUNDED BY GENERAL O. O. HOWARD

ENMETT J. SCOTT, A. M., LL. D.
SECRETARY-TREASURER

December 28, 1923.

JUNIOR COLLEGE

KELLY MILLER

DEAN

Justice Louis D. Brandeis,
U. S. Supreme Court,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

I am enclosing herewith the plan of a Negro organization based upon the idea of the Sanhedrin called by Napoleon in the early part of the nineteenth century. I would appreciate very highly your judgment of the advantage of the movement as affecting the welfare of the Negro group.

Yours truly,

Kelly Miller

E
185.5
.M5
C.1

THE NEGRO SANHEDRIN

A CALL TO CONFERENCE

BY

KELLY MILLER

Sanhedrin

The Sanhedrin was a Jewish assembly or council. The Great Sanhedrin was composed of seventy-one members, and sat at Jerusalem with supreme jurisdiction. The Lesser Sanhedrin, composed of twenty-three members, sat in each province with local and limited jurisdiction.

The use of the term in its present application grew out of the circumstances surrounding the Jews in Europe under the domination of Napoleon Bonaparte. The Emperor found that the relation between the Jew and the Gentile world was a fruitful source of antagonism, persecution and race friction. In order to compose this troublesome situation he called a Sanhedrin of all of the Jews under his jurisdiction, which assembled upon his invitation and perfected a scheme of working relationship between the two groups that has operated with more or less success and satisfaction down to the present time. Similarity of situation suggests a like conference of the Negro peoples of the United States to-day under the ancient designation. The Greater Sanhedrin with nation-wide function, and the Lesser Sanhedrin limited to city and local jurisdiction, also suggest a happy comparison.

The Negro Sanhedrin

The All-Race Conference, commonly known as the Negro Sanhedrin, has been called to convene in the city of Chicago, during the week of February 11, 1924. The civil rights bodies which joined in the issuance of the call are: The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, The Equal Rights League, The Race Congress, The Blood Brotherhood, the International Uplift League and the Friends of Negro Freedom. The special competence of this type of organization to issue such a call grows out of the fact that these civil rights bodies profess to function for the race as a whole, as against religious denominations, benevolent and fraternal orders, and business, economic and industrial agencies, which operate in limited and special spheres. The preliminary arrangements are in the hands of a central committee with plenary powers. The conference is not to be a mass meeting, but a delegated body, composed of representatives from national organizations functioning in general or special fields. In addition, there will be a minority of individual delegates composed of leading citizens in the various walks of life.

The Object of the Conference

There are already innumerable organizations in the racial field operating separately and severally. Each is efficient in its sphere, but no one of them, nor yet all of them combined, can claim to be sufficient as concerns the general welfare of the race. They are all aiming at the same objective, without correlation, unity of plan or harmony of procedure. Nor does any existing organization deal fundamentally with the whole problem of racial life and relationship. Each is concerned with some special feature rather than with the problem as a whole. The religious, political, educational, industrial, economic, and social features are but emanations and special

emergences from a common racial background. The Negro Sanhedrin hopes to reduce all of these social fractions to a common denominator. The whole is greater than any of its parts, and equal to the sum of all of its parts. The Negro Sanhedrin does not propose to interfere with any existing organization or to usurp its function. In a nutshell, its object is to make for understanding and unity. It hopes to reach an understanding of the problem as a whole and to promote harmonization of effort of existing agencies to secure the desired end. The All-Race Conference must consider the state of the race, I am almost persuaded to say, the united state of the race.

The Psychology of the Problem

The Negro question is a problem of psychology. The white race in America has a certain more or less fixed and definite attitude concerning the place and sphere of the Negro in the general scheme. A race consciousness will necessarily arise under compulsion of external circumstances. Purposive intelligence must be brought to bear to give it orderliness and direction. To inquire into the origin of race prejudice or to seek the limits within which it is modifiable would indeed furnish a theme of interesting and curious speculation. But we do know that it is a present, pressing, persistent fact which conditions the entire scheme of the Negro's life and relationship. Race statesmanship requires that we study to understand the operation of this controlling influence, to withstand as far as we may its hurtful effect, and to stand the residue that may not be withstood. It cannot be conceded for a moment that the race has not sufficient wisdom to formulate its own philosophy and to state its own case. This must be done in terms that are so comprehensive, clear and precise that the race will be compelled to accept and the world to take notice. So far, the Negro has not undertaken, in any serious way, to formulate a declaration of principles for his

own guidance. The white man has spoken for him and told him what he thinks he ought to do. We have followed the leading strings of material charity and intellectual philanthropy. But the time has now come when the Negro must think for himself and speak for himself in terms of his own understanding of his own condition. If he is not now prepared to use his own brain and his own tongue to think out and express the policy for his own intimate guidance, his helplessness is indeed pitiable. The white man has been generous and kind. He has spoken for us when our tongues were tied; but now our tongues have been loosed and our intellectual energies released. The white man at his best can no longer speak for us within the circumscribed area to which his prejudice confines us. Any group that is devoid of enlightened self-expression is doomed.

The Temper of the Conference

The spirit of the Conference must be sane, temperate and determined. It must avoid the fatuous extremes of idle boasting and cowardly surrender. Such conferences usually open the cave of the winds. The time is wasted with vacuous verbosity, loud-voiced loquacity and sonorous silliness. It is in vain that we denounce the white race as being unpatriotic, unchristian and inhuman; and to no useful purpose do we excoriate the South for its sins of commission and the North for its sins of omission, beyond the natural expression of righteous indignation. Wild demands which the demandant has no means of enforcing, are but vain vociferations whose echo returns to torment his own ears. It is to be hoped that no such impotent waste of while will invade the conference. We are a group of ten millions in the midst of ten times our own numbers. The welfare of one must not be sought at the expense of ten. All of our policies must be patriotic and considerate of the whole equation of which we constitute but a minor factor. We can surrender no rights, inalienable nor conferred. But we must measure

our powers against the task imposed. We must know where the task exceeds our strength. It is as suicidal to excite impotency to try conclusions with might, as it is to yield supinely without the fullest trial of strength. We must avoid the folly of defying the facts of the universe and of shaking the fist of defiance at forces we cannot combat.

A Motto

In quest of a motto for the spirit and temper of the Negro Sanhedrin, my search led to the foreword of Guizot to his *History of Civilization*.

There is great value in an expressive motto. The proper state of mind is essential to any deliberative enterprise. Our situation demands a just balance between courage and caution, ambition and restraint, resourcefulness and good sense. There are many temperaments and dispositions. Some are timid, some are temerarious; some are radical, some restrained; some are hasty, some hesitant. Many men of many minds must be adjusted to a common point of view. Guizot, in the book referred to, has admirably expressed the situation thus:

"We continually oscillate between an inclination to complain without sufficient cause and to be too easily satisfied. We have an extreme susceptibility of mind, an inordinate craving, an ambition in our thoughts and desires, and in the movements of our imagination; yet when we come to practical life, when struggle, when sacrifice, when efforts, are required for the attainment of our object, we sink into lassitude and inactivity. Let us not be invaded by either of these vices. Let us estimate fairly what our abilities, our knowledge, our power enable us to do; and let us attempt nothing that we cannot lawfully, justly and prudently—with proper respect for the principles upon which our social system, our civilization is based—attain."

Guizot has uttered the appropriate word, which applies with peculiar pertinence to our racial situation. The universal formula fits the requirements of our special case. If we build upon such a foundation we shall rear a structure that cannot be shaken down.

Is an All-Negro Conference Possible ?

Will an all-race conference lead to an all-race wrangle? The critical white world anticipates the spectacle of internal, interminable dissension whenever the Negro assembles to consider his own affairs. There is abundant precedent to justify this expectation. Minorities are ever prone to work at cross purposes. The helplessness of the weak is accentuated by their inability to agree among themselves. The policy of the powerful has always been to divide and conquer. The laboring man represents four-fifths of our electorate. The control of the government would fall quickly into his hands if he could only agree upon a plan of political action. But the crafty capitalist keeps him under by keeping him asunder. The labor party of England now represents the major minority party in parliament. It is only their fatal lack of harmony that keeps this party from manning and controlling the British government. The Democratic minorities in the North and the Republican minorities in the South always furnish the greater number of contests at our national conventions.

Lack of responsibility gives rise to rashness of assertion and action. One is prone to indulge in the wildest extravagance of utterance and denunciation of his antagonist when no definite consequence or accountability attaches to his words. But when he is held to strict public account for every word and deed, he is likely to be more guarded in his utterance and more conciliatory in his mode of expression. Majorities are responsible, minorities wield a free lance. It is curious to note how extravagant and blatant the Republican minority was in criticism of the government under President Wilson, as contrasted with its reticence and hesitancy when it became the majority party and vested with authority and power. Wild words, assumption of infallibility, loud-mouthed denunciation of opponent, bitter personal attack, fruitless

row and wrangle may be expected in a group that has never been intrusted with power or sobered by responsibility.

The Negro has never been admitted to responsible participation in government. He naturally enough shows the evil consequences of this deprivation. Internal dissension is his besetting sin. His chief dynamic is derived from dissent. He would a hundred times rather fight his fellow Negro than an enemy of the white race. Animosity is always intensified by nearness of relationship. Would to God the Negro might spend half the energy in combating the common enemy that he wastes in bootless internal strife. How long, O Lord, how long, must these things be? Slavery sowed the seed of dissension whose tree hangs big with bitter fruit. We still partake thereof and contend needlessly one with another. But we must throw off this infirmity, if need be, by sheer calculation and prudence. Hamlet said to his mother: "Assume chastity, if you have it not." The Negro leaders must assume the semblance of unity of aim and effort, even though they have it not. We may, by assuming a virtue and by persistent practice, make the assumption true. If we proceed on the basis that this present disposition to disunion and strife is inherent and cannot be overcome, then our case is hopeless and our cause is lost. The longer we delay, the stronger will the disposition grow.

We are now divided into a hundred separate camps. Each is aiming, in its own way, at the same objective. There is untold waste in friction, rivalry and jealous antagonism. Everyone is prone to think that his way is *the* way. Where none is certain each is infallible. A philosopher once said that men never fall out about what they know, but about what they don't know. If any one of us had the sure infallible key to the solution of the problem, it would only be necessary for him to proceed to solve the problem by his method, and satisfy us all. After we have said all we have to say, and done all that we know how to do, in separate alignments, the problem persists in all of its perplexing forms and

phases. The only thing left untried is united wisdom and judgment.

There is no need of despair. As long as the objective is possible, the trial is worth while. We shall probably not all think as one on any particular detail but we will all agree on essential principles. Programs will vary with local and individual circumstances and conditions; principles are universal and unvarying. If, as an outcome of the proposed conference, the various agencies and organizations reach a common understanding, and agree upon plans of procedure, so that the contributions of each will reinforce, and not neutralize, those of the other, we shall be well on the way toward the accomplishment of the end we all have in view. Nothing can keep ten million of our group from their just share in the civilization in which they are involved and which they help to maintain, except their own folly. If in this year of our Lord, after two generations of education and opportunity, we are not able to unify our forces and solidify the power resident within us, then our faith is vain and our hope is vain.

We have an educated class sufficient in numbers and understanding to cope with the most complex human condition. Great will be the condemnation of our *intelligentsia* if it continues to hide its light under a bushel. Let the best minds the best hearts and the best consciences of the race compose their petty diversities, and come together in conference for the common good. "Come, let us reason together," says the voice of wisdom.

The Necessity for the Negro Sanhedrin

The time is out of joint. Racial portents are ominous. The rising tide of color threatens to engulf the world. The World War has left the world upset. The wavering balance of human relationships has been shaken out of its normal equilibration. The agencies upon which we are accustomed to rely are functioning but feebly towards racial adjustment.

The religious, political, economic and educational machinery, as at present operative, does not seem to effect a satisfactory adjustment of the various races and nations of mankind. Forces and influences now at work, if allowed to go on unchecked, will fix the Negro in a position of fatal helplessness. The Negro problem is becoming more complex and perplexing. The experiments in self government in Hayti and Liberia seem to be failing. The attempt of Reconstruction to give the Negro full citizenship status has failed of predicted success. Public sentiment is rapidly relegating the race to a separate and inferior status. The Negro alone has it in his power to direct wisely the movement of his own race amidst the dangers and vicissitudes of an inhospitable environment.

The ten million American Negroes occupy a unique position among the racial groups of the world. Transplanted from a distant continent, thrust servilely into the midst of a disdainful civilization, given the full status of citizenship by the exigencies of economic and political exactions, the Negro is a part of the American people, and yet apart from them. They cannot completely isolate him; they will not wholly assimilate him. His interests and activities are so intricately intermixed with those of the general population that the welfare of one becomes the welfare of all. And yet he is assigned to separate areas within whose boundaries he must work out his own destiny, mainly through his own endeavor. A semi-subject people in the midst of democracy is an anomaly. If the law breaks down at the color line, democracy becomes a self-confessed failure. If the law applies alike to all, the color line will wipe out itself. And so we must adjust ourselves between alternate perplexities of the white man's mood.

Within the next half generation there will be a tremendous change in the scheme of race adjustment in the United States. The quickened conscience of the nation will not consent to go on living forever on the basis of a lie. The relation of the Negro will become more firmly established on a basis of equality, or will settle into a status of frankly declared inferiority. Which it shall be, will depend upon the Negro

himself. The time is ripe for treatment. Instant action is demanded, hesitancy is dangerous. Delay may prove fatal.

Why a Negro Conference?

The Negro group has special and peculiar interests and relations, infinitely more serious and vital than any other subordinate group into which our population is divided. There are fourteen million foreigners in this country. Their peculiar problems are limited to one generation, and will pass away within a half century. Three million Jews are segregated only in religious alignment and domestic relations. The separation is of the Jew's own preference. He labors under no political, civil or social disabilities by virtue of race or color. Twenty million Catholics differ from the Protestant majority only in forms of belief and modes of worship. The Negro alone is separated from the rest of the nation by the whole diameter of the social intimacies of life. This *regime* is imposed upon him. He did not make it; he cannot unmake it. Special group interests call for special treatment. If the Jews find it necessary to meet in nation-wide conferences to consider matters that concern Jewry alone; if the Catholics form national organizations to promote interests peculiar to their religion, surely the Negro group needs to give attention to its own intimate affairs.

The Negro is the only section of the American people which is assigned to separate cars, is segregated in residential areas, confined to separate schools, disfranchised by tricky contrivances, and is denied accommodations in theaters, hotels and places of public resort. He alone is lynched on account of his race and color rather than his crime. The terms "white" and "colored" carry all but the separative connotations "Jew and Gentile," "Greek and Barbarian," "Christian and Heathen," as historical lines of cleavage of mankind. The Negro constitutes a nation within a nation with a body of intra-racial needs and demands which make the all-race conference imperative.

The Origin of Race Churches

About the beginning of the nineteenth century, Negro communicants found themselves frozen out of the Christian Church. They were confined to the rear pews and upper galleries where mayhap the droppings of the showers of the Gospel might fall even on them. The function of the church is to unite men in one solid phalanx of Christian brotherhood. And yet the Christian Church in America has been the one separative agency between the races. There always has been a closer racial unity in politics, business and education than in religion. Even to-day the Negro finds it more comfortable to deal with the white man in his office where he manipulates politics or conducts business than at his church where he professes to be concerned with the affairs of the soul.

In these early years the sense of manly self-respect prompted the Negro religionists to organize independent denominations where they might worship God face to face without being hidden behind the screen of servility. Thus the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and the great Negro Baptist Church had their origins. A century and more of ecclesiastic independence justifies the faith and manly courage of the founders. We may indeed speculate what would have been the religious state of the race to-day had the Negro accepted the inferior position in the church to which the "master and servant" interpretation of Christianity relegated him. He would still be in the rear pews and upper galleries.

Early Negro Conventions

In the middle thirties of the last century when large numbers of manumitted and fugitive slaves found their way into the free states, they began to think collectively upon the proscriptive lot that was forced upon them and to devise means to promote and safeguard their own welfare. Negro

conventions were organized to take into consideration the civil rights of the race throughout the free states. Such organizations met annually or at intervals until the downfall of slavery and the Reconstruction of the South. In reading the deliberations and addresses of these early Negro conventions, one is forced to wonder if the intelligence, race patriotism and power of leadership of that day suffers or shines by comparison with this day. One thing is clear—their statemanship was better calculated to meet the requirements of their day than ours is of ours.

Reconstruction Hopes

During the palmy days of Reconstruction, the Negro was led to feel that his political, civil, and social relations would be so far amalgamated with the whites that specific racial movements would be unwise and unnecessary. One is amazed at the shallow optimism of the Negro leaders during that epoch. They were wholly misled by surface indications and failed to fathom the deep-seated sociological forces at work underneath. The emotion excited by the anti-slavery agitation culminated in the Civil War, which heated the thermometer of American passion and caused it to rise many degrees above its normal registry. In this heat of feeling and passion of the hour, the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments were added to the Constitution; civil rights statutes were passed, and force bills were proposed to give them immediate and full effect. But as soon as the passions of war began to abate, the thermometer began to fall, and has been registering lower and lower degrees of disfavor down to the present day. All this transformation took place during the ten years immediately following the Civil War. It could not have transpired a decade sooner nor a decade later. These enactments were the results of a tidal wave of public sentiment. But now the tide has receded, and left them little supporting public sentiment. But the Negro has the

residuary moral advantage of having the law and its righteousness on his side. He can always appeal to the conscience of the nation to uphold its own laws enacted at a time when public sentiment had reached its highest moral level.

When the Reconstruction fabric began to tumble, and the race became convinced that organizations were necessary to insure racial well being, several important attempts were made to bring about this desired result. I acknowledge indebtedness to the *Negro World*, for some of the facts stated below.

Recent Organizations

Twenty-five years ago, Bishop Alexander Walters, and T. Thomas Fortune, editor of the *New York Age*, issued a clarion call for a gathering of Negro leaders in the city of Washington during the last week of December, 1898. Prominent lawyers, editors, politicians, business men, and representatives of every walk of life were there. The lingering leaders of the lost cause of Reconstruction strove to regain the blissful seat from which they had been hurled. The Afro-American Council was organized. It functioned about six years, and thereupon it died. The lack of comprehensive plan, the intemperate insistence upon aggravating incidents, the rivalry for office, the ambition of politicians with mercenary proclivities, and the attempt of the over-cautious to muzzle the voice of protest led to the undoing of the Afro-American Council. Out of its ashes, William Monroe Trotter, the intrepid editor of the *Boston Guardian*, organized the New England Suffrage League which has become the Equal Rights League, and is one of the constituent organizations joining in for the call of the Negro Sanhedrin.

In 1905, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois founded the Niagara Movement which, according to the *Negro World*, died a natural death by the peaceful waters of Sea Isle City, N. J., in the summer of 1908.

In 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was organized, being composed of both colored and white people especially interested in the political and civil rights of the Negro race. This organization, so far, has commanded larger resources and has functioned more effectively than any of its predecessors or contemporaries.

A little later, The National Race Congress was organized in Washington, under the inspiration and leadership of Rev. Wm. H. Jernagin, a Baptist clergyman of great vigor and race devotion.

The National Sociological Society, under the leadership of Prof. Jesse Lawson, has been revived after a long lapse of inactivity. The Friends of Negro Freedom, The Universal Uplift League, and the African Blood Brotherhood, are some of the more recent movements which have not yet had time to make a deep or abiding impression upon the minds of the race.

All of these organizations lay the chief stress of emphasis upon political and civil rights. There are innumerable segmented or limited organizations functioning in a specific interest or based upon limited eligibility. Such are the great religious denominations, the secret and benevolent orders, and economic and business enterprises.

African Movements

The Universal Negro Improvement Association is the contrivance of Marcus Garvey whose chief aim is to set up an independent civilization on the continent of Africa largely through the instrumentality of Afro-Americans. The Pan-African Congress originated by Dr. DuBois purports to be a consultive body composed of representative people of African blood now sojourning in the different countries of the world. It is the analogue of the League of Nations for the African race.

The Negro Sanhedrin, on the other hand, is concerned with the immediate problems of the Negro in the United States.

While it cannot be incurious as to the destiny of the Negro peoples as a whole, yet it must limit its deliberations to our domestic situation. Whatever is to be the destiny of the black race, and whatever part the Afro-American is to play in that destiny, it is perfectly plain that he must first demonstrate his capacity to cope with his own problems before he can claim competence to assume the leadership and direction of his blood brothers now scattered over the face of the earth.

Lack of Leadership

It will be readily conceded that there is no group of ten million people in the world that have the absolute and relative opportunity of the American Negroes which is making such little use of them. The Negro possesses every political right that the most favored citizen possesses, and yet he is a practical nullity in the state. He holds the industrial destiny of large and fertile areas stored up in the energy of his arm, and yet he is mainly a hewer of wood and drawer of water. In him is the start of great enterprises and great achievements, and yet we still pray to the white man: "Give us this day our daily bread." He indulges in vainglorious boasting over his accomplishments, when they are but the earnest of the greater things which he should do.

It is conceded that the race possesses emotional and religious possibilities surpassing the material coldness and indifference of the white world by which he is environed, and yet the Negro still looks to the white man to interpret the meaning and mission of Christianity. He has been, and still is, overpowered and intimidated. He does not dare to stretch himself out at full length. His powers must be loosened; his energies released. He is too dependent on the white man and too deferential to him. He is too prone to interpret all of the practical and higher values of life in terms of the experience and forms of expression manifested by other race varieties than his own. He has yet to feel that all funda-

mental virtues and values grow out of the basic needs and necessities of humanity. The Negro Sanhedrin will serve to create in us a new heart and to renew a right spirit of manly independence within the race.

Race Aim and Ideal

I have been in an exceptional position to observe the ultimate aims and ideals by which ambitious Negro youth are actuated. I have had the intimate handling of more Negro collegians than has fallen to the fortune of any other American citizen white or black, during the past twenty-five years. The vitally weak spot in our racial armor is the lack of some consuming motive which actuates the educated Negro youth of this day and generation. Technical intelligence is rapidly increasing, but the quickening power of the spirit grows not apace. The chief task of Negro leadership to-day is to impart to our youth an inspiring motive. The statesman is one who can formulate a workable policy and impress it upon the minds of his constituency in such persuasive form that they will be constrained to adopt it as a guiding rule of action. This is the supreme task of race statesmanship. We must delve below the surface into the deep philosophy of things.

There are but three great social motives which actuate the conduct of men. These are based respectively upon patriotism, religion and race. The appeal of country is easily made and quickly responded to. The Negro possesses unsurpassed patriotic capacity. If this country would only permit him to love it to the fullest extent of his affection, the patriotic motive would be all-compelling. But, except in times of war, when emotionalism is aroused, patriotism does not make a compelling appeal to him. I have seen Negro audiences refuse to sing "My country, 'tis of thee." Patriotism does not mean the same thing to the Negro boy in Mississippi that it does to the white boy, and cannot elicit the same response. The Ne-

gro is altruistically loyal by nature; he is faithful to his country even when it is not faithful to him; and let us hope that he may be permitted to be patriotic in the same sense as other citizens can be. But at the present time reasoned patriotism does not quicken and inspire the Negro youth to develop, exert and assert his highest powers and possibilities.

In the second place, religion is the great source of inspiration and aspiration which calls out the best endeavor of its adherents. But sad to say, religion to-day is appealing but feebly to the youthful ambition of America, and perhaps feeblest of all to the Negro youth. On a great missionary occasion attended by thousands of white and hundreds of Negro college students, appeal was made for student volunteers for the African field. Scores of white students, male and female, stepped forward in answer to the call; but not a single brother or sister in black. The Negro is allowing the white man's religious false face to obscure the Christ he hides behind it. It seems to me that a simpler interpretation of the secret and method of Jesus, divested of much of its ceremonial accretions and racial arrogance, should appeal to Negro youth as to no other, and as nothing else can hope to do. Meekness, forgiveness, long suffering and non-resentfulness of spirit—the essential Christian virtues—are imbedded in the soul-stuff of the Negro race. The Negro has to try hard, not to be religious. The Christian religion vibrates in harmony with his spiritual wave-length. It beats in sympathetic resonance with the impulse of his soul. It is not thinkable to formulate a controlling motive for the Negro without including the religious element which is the dominant note of his nature. The Negro's religion must not be derived from the white man but from its original source. Religion is always refracted by the medium through which it passes. One sees the Christ but dimly who views him through Teutonic glasses. The heavenly light will yet shine directly on the Negro's face; this he will reflect for the spiritual enlightenment of the world, without deviation in its direction or dimming of its brightness.

The third factor in the formation of a social ideal is the racial or group appeal. Here the Negro motive is at low ebb. We have a race without territorial or ethnic unity. The infusion of diverse bloods helps to frustrate orderly formation of race consciousness. The cunning policy of the white overlordship, which insists that all models of excellence shall be made in its own image, tends to the same end. The flesh and blood basis of brotherhood is the gospel of the Ku Klux Klan. Kinship of blood though not essential to, easily awakes, kinship of the spirit. The white and the non-white races form the separate American groups for the practical purposes with which we need now to concern ourselves. The race pride of our group must be based partly on blood and partly on social classification. The definition of a Negro that will meet all of the requirements of the Negro Sanhedrin, is anyone who would be jim-crowed in Virginia. Blood and color are but a badge of identification. This racial group, shut into itself by the pressure of prejudice, will perforce form a group consciousness, and the opportunities, possibilities, outlook and upreachings of this circumscribed circle must be presented to its youth in a manner to inspire them with hope and zeal.

Weaving these three threads of motive into one strand of duty, and service, and inspiration, the Negro youth can be made to feel that his function in the vineyard of humanity is not merely equal to, but superior to, that of any other group in this day and generation. The Sanhedrin will fail of its essential aim unless it holds up an ideal to Negro youth which is worth living for, worth striving for, and, if need be, worth dying for.

Inter- and Intra-Race Conferences

President Coolidge has recommended a joint commission composed of white and colored men to make a careful study of the entire fabric of race relationship and to recommend

suitable legislation to put its findings into effect. I was a member of the delegation that brought this question to the President's attention. The commission on race relationship appointed by Governor Lowden of Illinois, has issued a report which contains many interesting facts and wise suggestions. Great good may be expected to flow from such commissions, both local and national. The Negro is almost wholly dependent upon the white man for employment, and is conditioned by him in many of the essential relations of life. In all such inter-related matters the races can no more be divorced than capital from labor. We may also expect a wholesome measure of good understanding to flow from these inter-racial conferences. Mutual exclusion begets mutual distrust and suspicion. The Negro still needs much help from the benevolent whites whose human impulse is to help those less fortunate than themselves. But the best help is that which leads most quickly to self-help. Dependence tends to perpetuate itself. We should look to philanthropy only so far and so long as it may be necessary, and no farther and no longer.

"To the feasts of lesser men, the Gods unbidden go." The white man is disposed to feel that his superior position confers upon him the right to know all the Negro's secrets and to participate in all of his plans. There are many well-meaning colored people who decry the formation of any purely Negro movement which does not let the white man in on the ground floor. They argue that such projects but tend to widen the gap between the races and confuse rather than clarify the situation. Some have asked me if it is the plan of the Negro Sanhedrin to have white men participate in its proceedings. On receiving a negative response, they have shaken their heads in sad dissent, and gone away sorrowful. Too many Negro gatherings waste the time listening to well-meaning white men tell how their grandfathers were kind to their slaves, and how they themselves used to play with Negro playmates. They flatter their audiences by repeating the familiar recital of the race's wonderful progress and accomplishments but add nothing to the construc-

tive purpose of the proceedings. The Negro is more likely to gain self-respect and the respect of his fellows by sailing under his own steam, when the craft is to carry only Negro passengers. We gain the esteem of our fellow men by having what they want rather than by wanting what they have. Before the Negro becomes one with the rest of the American people, he must become one with himself.

Inter-racial conferences are made necessary by the segregated life which the race is forced to live. The laboring man would be kept forever in a weak and dependent position if he held only joint meetings with the capitalists. The Jews have innumerable relations with the gentiles which they consider on common grounds and in common council. But when they deal with matters peculiar to their race and religion, they meet behind closed doors. The Catholics form a solid part of our common citizenship. Most of their relations are considered along with the rest of the population. There is no hint or squint of religion in their ordinary dealings with their Protestant fellow citizens. But when it comes to the intimate internal affairs of their religion, no Protestant would dare suggest a share in shaping their plans and policies. The Congregational, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian denominations operate as general organizations for all of their membership; and yet the colored contingents of these several religious bodies find it necessary to meet in separate councils to consider plans and formulate policies to meet the peculiar needs of their semi-segregated relationship. The Young Men's Christian Association has its Negro department, which, though a part of, is yet apart from, the Christian organization to which it belongs. The colored membership seeks its own management, and meets in separate conclaves to discuss the peculiar problems of its racial circumstances and situation.

If the white race should consent never to hold a meeting without the presence of the Negro, then the Negro might agree to hold no separate sessions. The Negro Sanhedrin has no sinister secrets. It does not seek the wizardry of darkness to conceal its evil deeds. All of its aims are in harmony

with the Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule, the Sermon on the Mount, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution of the United States.

Politics

Senator Ingalls, of Kansas, once defined politics as the metaphysics of force. It is the dynamic factor in social control. The Government is assuming a larger and larger share in shaping the general welfare, as the affairs of the country become more and more complex. It used to be a maxim that the Negro does well enough so long as he lets politics alone. It is no longer possible for any class of citizens to be indifferent to the affairs of government or to be ignored by them. We must all look to the government for the cure of existing ills and for the protective measures of the future. The government is but the social agency through which society carries out its collective will. The Negro's place in the national scheme is peculiarly related to and conditioned by political considerations. In a democracy conducted by partizan government, politics is a game. To the victors belong the power of office, if not the spoils thereof. Any group may expect greater consideration from that party which it places in power. The politicians who make the game of politics a profession find easy favor with the administration which owes its success to their prowess. Our Negro politicians do well to corral the Negro vote for their favorite party, and to hold that party to its just obligations to the race. As practical men, we must use practical methods. The much-abused politicians constitute a factor and a force which can neither be denied or ignored. But it is dangerous to let politicians get the underhold on any movement which aims to function broadly for the welfare of the people. Political ethics never rises above barter in the commodity of votes. The dynamic power of the ballot is the most effective agency through which to promote many of the aims of the race. But no race organi-

zation should sell its soul to any political party. Negro organizations too often fall victims to this evil. The Negro Sanhedrin must avoid any such entangling alliance. After all, our fundamental problems are deeply sociological rather than narrowly political.

The Agenda

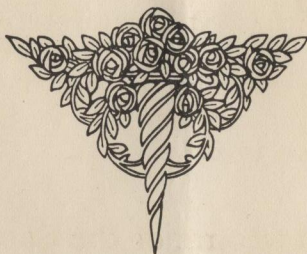
Negro organizations usually indulge in a recital of wrongs, recount exciting incidents, make denunciatory speeches, pass high-sounding resolutions, and adjourn *sine die*, with little abiding result. Such pronounced evils as lynchings, jim-crowism, disfranchisement, segregation and race proscription will inevitably form a large part of the program of any race meeting. Irritating symptoms cannot be ignored. A man with the toothache has little patience with abstract philosophy. The sufferer from any painful malady seeks immediate relief. Protest against wrong is but a natural reaction.

The Negro can hardly be expected to forget his grievances or cease to complain about them until they have been removed. But symptoms are merely surface indications of deep-seated underlying causes. We must remove the seeds of disease from the system by determining, if we may, its nature and cause and finding an effective cure.

The Outcome of the Sanhedrin

"Let me write 'union' at the top of the page, and I care not what you write underneath," was Lincoln's famous reply to the representatives of the seceding states seeking to effect a settlement of differences. If the Negro Sanhedrin can but effect union of aim and harmony of purpose its chief aim will have been accomplished. It is more essential that the Race should act in unison than that it should act in any given direction. The Negro Sanhedrin is an influence rather than

an organization. Principles must be laid down and programs outlined. The plans must be constructive, remedial, ameliorative and inspirational. The resulting type of agency which is to put into effective operation the things agreed on must be the outcome of the conference itself. Its sessions will probably be triennial. It is not without significance that the Sanhedrin is to be held during the week covering the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln.



an organization. Principles may be laid down and programs outlined. The plans must be constructive, remedial, ameliorative and inspirational. The resulting type of agency which is to put into effective operation the things agreed on must be the outcome of the conference itself. Its sessions will probably be triennial. It is not without significance that the Sanhedrin is to be held during the week covering the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln.



1817'31

Ag 4

D6'41

